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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000243

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [ASEC](#) [CG](#) [AO](#)  
SUBJECT: SPECIAL POLICE FORCES ASSAULT BDK COMPOUND IN  
BAS-CONGO PROVINCIAL CAPITAL

REF: KINSHASA 218

Classified By: PolCouns D. Brown, reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Congolese special police forces assaulted the compound of the separatist movement Bundu dia Kongo (BDK) March 8 in the Bas-Congo capital of Matadi, partially destroying it, killing several people and robbing a number of nearby residents. Details of the operation remain sketchy, but the situation in Matadi is now calm. Press reporting cites similar incidents in villages in rural areas north of Matadi. MONUC issued a statement of concern, and is sending two investigative teams to the province this week. The EU is also considering issuing a statement. MONUC estimates at least 60 people have died since the beginning of police operations against BDK February 28, but cautions that little on-the-ground information is currently available. End summary.

¶2. (U) Special Congolese police units firing tear gas and rifles assaulted the compound of the Bundu dia Kongo (BDK) movement March 8 in the Bas-Congo capital of Matadi in what appears to have been part of a concerted move against the separatist politico-religious movement in the western part of the province. Vice governor Deogratias Nkusa told state broadcaster RTNC two people were killed in the operation, five wounded, including a police officer, and seven arrested; other reports vary. We have received no reports that any Americans were harmed in the incident.

¶3. (C) Senior analysts at MONUC's Joint Mission Analysis Cell (JMAC) told us the assault involved elite units of the Rapid Intervention Police (PIR) organized by Police Inspector General John Numbi late last year. These include the Simba Battalion, an all-Katangan force drawn from Numbi's personal guard and trained in special operations by the Angolan military. JMAC has concluded some 5-600 PIR are currently deployed in the province. PIR now appear to be engaged in a mopping up exercise north and west of Matadi. MONUC's Radio Okapi reported clashes between PIR and BDK March 10 in the town of Patu on the Lemba-Lukula.

¶4. (SBU) MONUC issued a statement the same day expressing strong concern about the events in Matadi. Ambassadors of EU member states in Kinshasa have transmitted to Brussels the text of a proposed statement calling for calm, proportionate use of force and a dialogue between government authorities and BDK political leaders.

¶5. (U) Details of the Matadi operation remain sketchy, but it began at around 2 p.m. and was over by late afternoon. The BDK compound, located in the impoverished Momo district on hills above downtown Matadi, is one of many zikwa -- a

combination meeting hall, prayer center and residence -- maintained by the sect. Reports agree that the police began the assault with tear gas, then bullets; panic ensued. "The police arrived. They circled the neighborhood and when they opened fire everyone began to run," according to an eyewitness quoted in the French press. Press accounts of the incident include reports of police looting nearby houses and robbing residents of cash, cell phones and other valuables.

¶6. (U) Matadi mayor Jean-Marc Nzeyidio told AFP March 8 he had not been informed in advance of the operation. He said that the BDK site was a walled compound that included straw huts and a small brick house. It had been partially destroyed and was occupied by police by the time he arrived. Nzeyidio said he saw the body of a BDK member there (other reports note that the dead man was wearing a red bandana and amulettes, apparently in the widely-held BDK belief that they provide protection from bullets), then visited the city morgue, where he saw the body of a two-year old, apparently hit by a stray round. He told the same reporter that calm had returned by the following day, with people out and about in the district and going to Sunday church services.

¶7. (U) MONUC's Radio Okapi broadcast news of similar operations in the area north of Matadi March 8. It cited reports that BDK zikwa had been burned in the villages of Kwakwa, Lukimba, Nsanda and Mvuzi, located some 35 km from the north bank of the Congo river on the main Matadi-Boma road. The reports also included claims of looting, robbery, sexual harassment and rape by police forces. Both Nkusa and Nzeyidio have been quoted in the press deploring the actions of "certain agents" of the police.

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¶8. (C) MONUC's Radio Okapi asserted March 9 that unnamed "political-administrative" authorities had cited a March 5 complaint by the country's largest flour mill, Matadi-based Midema, as justification for the assault. AFP reported the same day that Midema had filed a complaint with provincial police chief General Raus Chalwe March 5 after a company bus transporting shift workers had been stopped and searched by BDK militants the night before. Its American manager confirmed to us March 10 that the incident had taken place, and expressed concern that its use by authorities as justification for their action could expose his employees to retaliation.

¶9. (C) MONUC is sending two teams -- one humanitarian, one human rights -- to the province this week for separate investigations of the recent violence. JMAC has received credible reports of six people killed in the most recent violence, and estimates some 60 dead based on credible reports since operations began February 28 (reftel), including 36 in one village. Most deaths have been reported in the area Luozi-Tscha-Seke Banza north and northeast of Matadi.

¶10. (U) The government has yet to amend its March 3 official total of seven dead conveyed to the diplomatic community by Interior Minister Denis Kalume. Bas-Congo politicians have given other figures to the press: Governor Floribert-Simon Mbatshi reported 22 dead at Luozi as of March 3; Jeannot Balu, chief of Seke Banza, said that two police and one BDK member were killed there March 3, and about a dozen wounded by gunshots. None have cited first-hand information from hospitals.

¶11. (U) Separately, a March 7 meeting of the Council of Ministers, presided by Kabila, agreed to prosecute "all the direct and indirect authors of these troubles."

¶12. (C) Comment: JMAC's director cautioned March 9 that there is little on-the-ground information currently available. Indeed, it is not clear how much information the interior minister himself has access to. A distraught

National Assembly deputy from Bas-Congo told us March 9 he had called Kalume three times during the day of the Matadi operation to complain, but Kalume told him he had yet to receive a report by 10 p.m. that night. Kalume and Numbi, whom one report suggests is leading the operation, have been increasingly at odds since Kabila named Numbi to head the police in June 2007. End comment.

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